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ABSTRACT

A system was developed to allow an observer/evaluator to objectively evaluate inservice teacher training workshops along twelve dimensions covering content, method of presentation, and participation, using a series of objective observable criteria identified by program administrators. The system provided a comprehensive evaluation of staff training while removing much of the burden of workshop evaluation from participating teachers. Involvement of administrators in tailoring the instrument for specific program goals made evaluation a natural outgrowth of program planning and an effective means of providing immediate evaluation information in a usable form. Although the model was used in the evaluation of the Title I inservice training program in the Dallas Independent School District, it may be adapted to the specific objectives of any local inservice training program. The Personnel Development Observation Form and Participants' Questionnaire are included. (Author/GK)

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An Objective-Referenced Observational Model for Evaluating Staff Development Programs

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Dallas Independent School District

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According to one researcher (Rubin, 1971), inservice training in education began in the middle of the nineteenth century. At that time, national committment to universal elementary education necessitated the hiring of thousands of inexperienced teachers. In many modern school districts, teachers have spent considerable amounts of time attending training activities. In Texas, for example, participants in inservice education activities attended an average of 42 hours in 1970 (Texas Education Agency, 1977). How to evaluate these programs has remained a matter of concern. In 1968, the United States Office of Education (USOE) spent nearly 9 million dollars on inservice training of Title-I teachers, though, they reported, there was little evidence to show that it paid off in improved learning for students. A federal task force found that one of the biggest problems was lack of effective evaluation (Buskin, 1970).

The situation has not perceptibly improved. Teachers may still undergo intensive training designed to change attitudes and impact their classroom behavior - and be totally unaffected. As pressure increases to show how money spent in education pays off, inservice training for teachers may prove to be one of the most vulnerable of programs unless its quality and benefit can be documented. This paper presents a model that can be used for developing, monitoring and reporting the quality of inservice training workshops.

Research literature on inservice staff development is scarce. Lawrence (1974) found the workshop to be the most common format for inservice education and identified characteristics of successful inservice education programs. Lawrence (1974) and Anderson (1969) documented changes in attitude or behavior of teachers who underwent

inservice training. Collins (1978) outlined critical issues regarding the possible criteria and processes for evaluation of inservice programs. Several researchers have described the limited extent to which evaluation of inservice programs does occur. Lawrence (1974) found that few school districts, including large districts, carried on careful evaluations. Nearly all of the 97 studies and evaluation reports he analyzed were written by agencies outside the school systems. In 1977, the Texas Education Agency reported that the evaluation of inservice education conducted in most Texas school districts was subjective and superficial; of the evaluation methods used, 40% consisted of the use of verbal feedback from participants, 38% of teachers' completing written questionnaires at the end of sessions, and 15% consisted of teachers' completing annual surveys. In the 1968 report, the USOE referred to those types of evaluation methods when it wrote, "too often evidence consisted of cliches about enthusiasm of teachers, comments on evaluation forms by teachers, and responses of principals who may or may not have observed how teachers used new techniques supposedly offered during workshops" (Buskin, 1970). Absent from the research literature on inservice education is an in-depth study of the quality of inservice programs (Texas Education Agency, 1977).

Effective evaluation of inservice education is needed for many reasons. The following have been cited by various sources: validation of past action and guidance for future action, improving of procedure and content (Lawrence, 1974), accounting of money spent and justification of future financing (Lawrence, 1974; Smith, 1977), and accountability for school personnel (Griffin, 1978).

Several specific suggestions for improving evaluation techniques have been made. Techniques presently employed have been faulted for emphasizing short-term goals rather than long-term outcomes. (Arkin and Raths, 1978; Halliwell, 1978). Bishop (1976) and Griffin (1977) have suggested using multiple data sources for evaluation rather than relying on a single one such as teacher comments. Griffin urged that evaluation techniques be considerate of participants' time and energy. Instead of requesting that participants complete questionnaires, he suggested direct observation of inservice training sessions by a participant observer who systematically recorded events. Smith (1977) also favored the use of "unobtrusive" measures such as observation. Andrews et al (1979) suggested that evaluation efforts focus on workshop conduct or quality of the presentation, as well as on content. They have developed what is by far the most advanced instrument to date for evaluating inservice workshops, a normed evaluation questionnaire. Participants' responses to objective and open-ended items on a two-page questionnaire may be interpreted by comparison with group norms developed by the authors.

That evaluation should be structured to contribute to decision-making and to program improvement is emphasized by Bishop (1976). He urged that it provide diagnostic and interim data and feedback to continuously assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program and its leadership. That evaluation of inservice education be of a formative character, on an ongoing basis rather than only after the fact, is stressed by several authors (Bishop, 1976; DeVore, 1971; Griffin, 1978; McLendon, 1977). The importance of inservice education staff's and participants' involvement

in evaluation efforts has also been noted (Lawrence, 1974; Bishop, 1976). Bishop feels it is essential that staff members know the types of evaluation measures to be employed and the relationship between data collected and the entire program, as well as their own relationship to it.

The relationship between program development and evaluation needs to begin in the program planning stage. Evaluation should be seen as an integral part of the design of the program; McDonald (1978) urged that program developers and evaluators jointly plan both the program and the evaluation design. Bishop (1976) suggests the use of discrepancy evaluation, the examination of the difference between the expected outcome or objective of the program, and the measured achievement of that objective. To perform this sort of criterion-based evaluation, the local program objectives must be made explicit. Once the criterion or standard is established, the discrepancy between it and actual achievement can be monitored on an ongoing basis to modify further planning and decision-making (Buskin, 1970).

The author of the present paper had previously evaluated inservice workshops using written questionnaires administered to participants at the conclusion of workshop sessions. Several limitations were involved with this technique: to avoid excessively long questionnaires, each workshop could be evaluated on only a few of the possible dimensions. Participants were seldom enthusiastic about having to make evaluative judgments at the end of a long session, and often responded in a

perfunctory fashion to the objective and open-ended items on the questionnaires. A number of participants seemed reluctant to express criticism, even on an anonymous basis.

A program administrator expressed concern that the evaluation reports she received were based solely on teacher feedback, and suggested that the evaluators themselves make evaluative judgments about the quality of the workshops they attended. To develop a structure and an objective basis for assessing the quality of a workshop on a number of specific dimensions, a list of statements using the phrase "a workshop should..." were first generated. These pertained to both the content ("A workshop should present practical suggestions.") and the presentation ("A workshop should include participation by those attending."). Sources for the statements included texts on inservice training, articles, etc. The statements were then prioritized and program administrators identified those which most comprehensively expressed their program goals for inservice workshops. The program administrators and evaluators conferred to determine precisely what range of observable behaviors by workshop presenters constituted successful attainment of each "should" statement or goal. These observable behaviors were called criteria. The statement involving participation, for example, gave rise to the following item:

The presentation should allow for group or individual participation by those attending the workshop.

Criteria:

1. Participants asked questions which were answered by presenter, and/or answered questions posed by presenter.
2. The presentation included activities in which participants were asked to engage on an individual basis.
3. The presentation included activities or discussions in which participants were asked to engage on a group basis.
4. Participants took part in demonstration, construction, or sharing of instructional materials.

In these conferences, the executive administrator and the immediate managers of the program determined the general goals and the range of criterion behaviors that constituted attainment of each goal. The evaluation staff who were present helped to clarify these and to express them in operational terms. They also anticipated possible problems on certain items which involved somewhat subjective judgments, and phrased these items to minimize the subjectivity.

The final instrument consisted of twelve items, covering the areas of quality of workshop content, method of presentation, and participation (Appendix A). The evaluator's instructions were to mark any of the criteria observed in the course of a workshop. The goals containing at least one marked criterion were considered attained and the workshop received a "successful" rating on that goal. On several items, one or more criteria were marked with an asterisk; program administrators had determined that these had to be observed in order to receive a "successful" rating. After each item, space was provided for the evaluator to record comments or explanations. The evaluator was instructed to list any activities or behavior observed which would qualify as additional or substitute criteria indicating attainment of a particular goal. The original instrument, which was designed to evaluate workshops for teachers and other instructional personnel, was subsequently adapted for use in workshops for community involvement personnel and for other professional support/administrative personnel.

The observation form covers a number of dimensions concerning the content and conduct of a workshop. To provide information on partipants' perceptions of the workshop, a brief questionnaire for them to complete

was designed (Appendix B). On it, participants are asked to state what they perceived as the main point of the workshop, to describe an idea or strategy gained in the workshop, and to make any suggestions or comments.

Copies of the completed observation forms and compilations of the teacher responses on the questionnaires are given to program administrators, who may use them as monitoring tools or as sources of program documentation. One concern expressed by workshop presentation staff should be mentioned. Some presenters, especially guest speakers who are unfamiliar with the system, may be made uncomfortable if the observer/evaluator completes the observation form during the workshop session. In such situations, completing the form immediately after the session may be advisable. As with the use of any observation-based rating system, some courtesy and consideration on the part of the evaluator will go a long way in making inservice training staff and presenters comfortable with the system.

Together, the observation form and participant questionnaire cover a broad range of evaluative dimensions. Perhaps the greatest advantage of using the observation model is that these dimensions can be applied to every workshop without having to use lengthy teacher questionnaires.

Data from the observation form may be summarized in table form as in the simulated sample in Table 1. Of the four goals listed, it can be seen that the workshops were most successful in attaining goal number 1, and least successful on number 3. Of the four workshops, October 1 seemed the most successful one, and September 1 and December 1 were notably less successful on the four goals.

Table 1

Evaluation Ratings on Personnel Development Observation Form[a]
Instructional Personnel

Goal	Workshop Dates				S Ratings	U Ratings
	Sept. 1	Oct. 1	Nov. 1	Dec. 1		
1. The presentation should include content aimed at strengthening participants' knowledge of curriculum.	S	S	S	S	100%	0%
2. The workshop should incorporate practical suggestions for strategies or materials aimed at improving instruction.	U	S	S	S	75%	25%
3. The presentation should include follow-up services or activities designed to support or supplement the information gained in the workshop.	U	S	U	U	25%	75%
4. The presentation should reflect an awareness of the special aspects of the Title-I program or of the specific responsibilities of Dallas Independent School District Title-I personnel.	S	S	S	U	75%	25%
					Average Percents	
					69%	31%
	50%	100%	75%	50%	S Ratings	
	50%	0%	25%	50%	U Ratings	

[a]Data in this table are simulated for illustration purposes.

The observation model incoprorates some of the aspects of the discrepancy model of evaluation (Buskin, 1970; Bishop, 1976). It also reflects an attempt to deal with many of the concerns mentioned in the literature, including the use of multiple data sources (Bishop, 1976; Griffin, 1977) and unobtrusive measures (Smith, 1977), the evaluation of workshop conduct and quality as well as content (Andrews et al, 1979), and the involvement of both program management and evaluation staff in the evaluation process (McDonald, 1978).

This model was used in the evaluation of the extensive Title-I inservice training program in the Dallas Independent School District in the 1980-81 school year. The instruments may be adapted to the specific objectives of any local inservice training program; additional goals tailored to local needs could be incorporated following a similar instrument development process. If program administrators are sufficiently involved in the planning and utilization of the model, evaluation of inservice training can be a natural outgrowth of program planning and an objective means with which to improve it.

Appendix A

Personnel Development Observation Form

Department of Research and Evaluation

Personnel Development Observation Form

Date_____ Workshop Title_____

Evaluator_____ Presenter_____

Approximate number of participants_____ Presenter's Title_____

Instructions: Each goal is considered successfully attained if any of the CRITERIA listed are observed. In addition, any criteria marked with an asterisk must be observed to attain a successful rating for that goal.

Circle the numbers of the specific criteria observed. Record the successful or unsuccessful achievement of each goal by using the following abbreviations:

S = Successful attainment of goal observed
U = Unsuccessful attainment of goal observed
NA = Goal was not applicable to this workshop.

If necessary, justify or explain your judgment in the Comment area and list there any activities or behavior observed which would qualify as additional criteria indicating attainment of the goal.

Goals Related to Workshop Content

_____1. Goal: The workshop should include content aimed at strengthening participants' knowledge of curriculum.

Criteria: 1. Information was given regarding specific Dallas Independent School District curriculum.

Comment: _____

_____

_____ 2. Goal: The workshop should incorporate practical suggestions for strategies or materials aimed at improving instruction. ("Instruction" is defined to include any techniques, skills, or information designed to support the teaching-learning process.)

Criteria:* 1. Concrete suggestions for practical instructional strategies or materials were made.
* 2. Suggestions for instructional strategies were related to Baseline objectives.
* 3. Suggestions for instructional strategies were applicable to all grade levels taught by the teachers represented.

Comment: _____

_____

_____ 3. Goal: The presentation should include follow-up services or activities designed to support or supplement the information gained in the workshop.

Criteria: 1. Presenter offered self as a source of follow-up information or assistance.
2. Participants were encouraged to contact a specific agency or resource person for follow-up information or assistance.
3. Current handouts with follow-up information were provided.

Comment: _____

_____

_____ 4. Goal: The presentation should reflect an awareness of the special aspects of the Title-I program or of the specific responsibilities of DISD Title-I personnel.

Criteria: 1. The workshop covered specific Title-I concerns and information.
2. The presenter explained and emphasized how the participants could apply what was learned in their own DISD Title-I settings.
3. The presenter displayed knowledge of specific Title-I procedures or activities, and incorporated this knowledge into the presentation of the material.

Comment: _____

_____

Goals Related to Method of Presentation

_____5. Goal: The theme(s), objective(s), or main point(s) of the workshop should be made clear to the participants.

Criteria: 1. The main point or theme was announced at beginning and referred to at least one more time in the course of the workshop.

Comment: _____

_____

_____6. Goal: The workshop should be presented in a positive and stimulating fashion.

Criteria: 1. Presenter demonstrated, in words and actions, knowledge and enjoyment of presented material.
2. Familiar information was presented in a novel fashion or from a different point of view.
3. The workshop content was presented in a novel or interesting fashion.

Comment: _____

_____

_____7. Goal: The informational content of the workshop should be presented in a clear and organized fashion.

Criteria: *1. It was apparent the presenter had organized the sequence of activities, and related these activities to the workshop theme or content.
2. Presenter followed a written outline or agenda which was shared with participants.
3. Presenter organized the material by verbally announcing new topics and clearly explaining transitions from one topic to another.
4. Presenter organized workshop content around the theme or objective, emphasizing or explaining how each new topic was related to it.

Comment: _____

_____

_____8. Goal: The presenter should include a summary of the main points of the workshop.

Criteria:
1. Presenter provided verbal summary.
2. Presenter asked participants to summarize main points verbally.
3. Presenter provided written summary of main points to participants.
4. Presenter provided summary or list of main points via an audio visual aid such as a transparency.

Comment: _____

_____

_____9. Goal: The time duration or pacing of the workshop should be appropriate.

Criteria:
*1. Breaks were appropriately timed to allow for participants' attention span, interest level, etc.
*2. Amount of time spent on subject was appropriate.
*3. Presentation began and ended close to the scheduled times.

Comment: _____

_____

_____10. Goal: The setting of the workshop should include adequate space, equipment, etc.

Criteria:
*1. Seating arrangements were comfortable, and flexible where necessary.
*2. All participants could see and hear the presentation.
*3. Setting was free of major distractions such as outside noise, excessive heat or cold.

Comment: _____

_____

Goals Related to Participation

_____11. Goal: The presentation should allow for group or individual participation by those attending the workshop.

Criteria:
1. Participants asked questions which were answered by presenter, and/or answered questions posed by presenter.
2. The presentation included activities in which participants were asked to engage on an individual basis.
3. The presentation included activities or discussions in which participants were asked to engage on a group basis.
4. Participants took part in demonstration, construction or sharing of instructional materials.

Comment: _____

_____

_____12. Goal: Participants should be encouraged to critique the presentation and respond to the information presented.

Criteria:
1. A special time for a critique of the presentation or verbal exchange between the presenter and participants was provided.
2. Presenter invited participants' comments and suggestions, and exhibited flexibility in dealing with feedback from participants.

Comment: _____

_____

Please provide a brief summary of the workshop content and activities, including a statement of the main point(s), theme(s), or objective(s) of the presentation. Attach a copy of the agenda if available.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B
Participants' Questionnaire

Personnel Development - Rapid Evaluation Form

Please help us evaluate this workshop by answering the following questions:

What was the main point of this workshop?_____

_____

Did you gain any ideas or strategies that can be applied to your own job situation?

Yes____ No____ Please give a specific example:_____

_____

Any suggestions or comments?_____

_____

_____

_____

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